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TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR NURSES

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TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR NURSES.

THE systematic education of women for nurses, has not attracted much attention in America until within a few years. This is rather surprising, in view of the fact that the Nightingale School for training nurses was opened fourteen years ago (June 24, 1860,) —others perhaps earlier still—and that in every respect, so far as we can learn, the system has operated well in England. The agitation of the subject now is, perhaps, a part of the general movement for the better education of women, or, indeed, for the better education of all persons, which has been felt all over our country. If so, it belongs to a class of reforms which stands second to none among those arising from this movement —to a class which will receive a more general support than any other, its tendency being, not to open to women a new and contested field, but to advance the standing of a profession which is already, by general consent, almost entirely conceded to women.

Some of the nurses who have practiced here hitherto, have had the advantage of having served in hospitals under the direction of physicians, and the opportunity of watching older nurses at their work; but the great majority have learned nursing as best they could, which in many cases means not at all. For instance, the list of nurses in the Boston Directory, contains 126 names, and many more must in fact be practicing in the city, for I find that the names of several well-known nurses are not included in the list; of these, probably not more than thirty or forty have had hospital experience for any great length of time. Now we have begun to realize what in England, France, and some parts of Germany, has long been regarded as a settled matter—that it is necessary to educate nurses, just as it is necessary to educate medical students or architects. In this respect, however, nursing has only shared a similar fate with most of the other occupations usually performed by women, dressmaking, cooking, etc. None of them until lately have been thought to require any systematic training. About thirty years ago there were no Normal Schools in this country. It was not even thought worth while to teach women to be teachers. A few years hence schools for nurses may be held to be as indispensable as Normal Schools are now.

The community has doubtless been much benefited by the experience which certain nurses have gathered when employed in the large hospitals, before going into private practice. Besides this unsystematized means of obtaining experience, women have been received, for several years past, at the New England Hospital for Women and Children, with the understanding that they were to serve there for a definite time, in order to become proficient in nursing; and for the past two years a regular system of practical and theoretical instruction has been organized, so that this hospital is now prepared to send out, every year, eight or nine women who have received one year's training, and have served in all the departments of the hospital in turn.

Everywhere the need is felt of nurses well educated in their profession, and nowhere has the supply of them kept up to the demand. In an account of the Liverpool school, written in 1865, we read: "The fact that the Nursing Institutions now existing are quite unable to supply applications for those willing to pay for the superior nursing, shows that the public are becoming aware of its importance. One single institution, in the space of six months, was compelled to refuse fifty applications. People willingly bring nurses from London institutions to Liverpool, and from Liverpool to London, at great additional expense, rather than, having once experienced the benefit of trained service, be obliged to fall back on the aid of the untaught." This report is the more striking when coupled with the statement that, at the census of 1851, 14 years earlier, there were in England 25,466 nurses by profession, and 2,822 midwives. In Boston, of the ten nurses graduated during the past two years from the New England Hospital, after a year of training there, almost all were engaged in advance, before their term of service at the hospital was ended, to take charge of cases in private families, and they have still continued to find more work than they could do, even during the past year, when the majority of nurses at large have been complaining, to physicians and at the intelligence offices, of lack of employment.

The following letter, comparing a nurse from this hospital with other nurses who had been employed by the writer, shows very clearly some of the results of careful training:

"Twelve different nurses I can easily remember who were in

my family, each from four to six or eight weeks. — Of all these, the only one I ever wanted a second time, or felt perfectly satisfied with, was a trained nurse from the New England Hospital, who had gone through the entire course of lectures and instruction, and nursed there for some time. She was quiet, orderly, neat, strictly attentive to the orders of the physician, even against the wishes of the patient, never suggesting an idea or opinion of her own,—a machine in his hands so far as treatment went, and a perfect one, while equally self-reliant and capable when an emergency made her independent action needful. Her cooking was exquisite, and everything was served with the tempting nicety so necessary to an invalid appetite. Her temper was even; no tales of servants down-stairs or former employers, or gossip of any kind, ever came into the sick-room, giving one a comfortable certainty that none would ever go from it. This woman being in no manner a superior, or intellectual, or gifted person, all these excellencies seemed to me to come from her training—the in-grafting of all she had heard, and learned and practiced at the hospital. Of other nurses who were excellent in some respects, I remember Miss M——, an old favorite nurse in Boston, who was also, I think, a hospital nurse, but had not gone through the training. She was faithful and efficient as long as the sickness was severe, but with no tact, and unreasonable and capricious as soon as the patient was out of danger. Mrs. N——, an excellent woman, with all the natural qualities which make a good nurse, lacked just the training and knowledge which would have given her self-reliance and promptness, and taken from her a superstitious fear of omens and warnings, distressing to the patient.”

I believe that this letter points out, none too plainly, difficulties which are well recognized by both patients and physicians.

With hearty recognition of the cheerful devotion and untiring service rendered by those nurses whose long experience in the sick-room has taught them much that is essential to good work, let us remember that this experience must have been partly earned through many a blunder at the outset, and at the expense of many a helpless patient. To avoid these blunders; to give to the intelligent pupil the benefit of the well-tested experience of others, in an

intelligent and systematized way, is the object of the Nurses Training School, as of all other schools worthy of the name.

The New York school has lately begun to send out to private families those nurses who, having been pupils for a year, still remain connected with the school for another year. The Directors report: "We now have four (nurses) out, and could have employed three times that number, if we could spare them, to meet the applications for their services. They are highly approved by the physicians and families so far, and we receive high wages for them." Even those who have learned nursing as well as they could, simply serving, without receiving systematic instruction, in the great hospitals of the city, are sought for and recognized as superior nurses. Although the Training School at the Massachusetts General Hospital, has only been open for a year, a great many applications have been made for nurses, all of which the Directors have, of course, been obliged to decline. Dr. Wylie of New York writes from England that, while he was at the Liverpool Training School, a surgeon came in to engage a nurse, and adds, "He told me it was customary with almost all medical men of Liverpool to get their nurses from this school, and the trained nurses were looked upon as an absolute necessity." Doubtless physicians in this country will soon come to the same opinion. A correspondent of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* writes: "If we desire to make a science of our art, to know if, and exactly how much, and after what time, and in what respect, our digitalis affects the pulse, and our calomel the temperature, or the daily or hourly variations in pulse and temperature from any cause, or if we wish to know the character of the excretions through the day, or to test the doctrine of crisis in our practice; or if we wish to give cold baths of a definite temperature in typhoid fever, or to have the ear syringed out, so that the fluid will go where it is wanted, or leeches or cups applied, or subcutaneous injections given, we cannot do it without the aid of skilled nurses, and we can do it with them, as has been abundantly demonstrated. With the surgeon the case is not very different. As matters stand, he must, in private practice, spend much time in doing what a skilled assistant could do as well and often better. There is no reason why the long list of surgical dressings, including the application of splints,

etc., should not be done by trained nurses, and the hurried surgeon be given the opportunity of eating his dinner in comfort and getting to the polls at election time. There is no reason why regularly educated physicians should be electricians or masseurs. The specialists for nervous diseases should know how electricity ought to be used in their department, and the surgeon in his, and the details could be perfectly well intrusted to skilled assistants."

Nursing of the poor at their homes has not as yet been undertaken by any American School, though, under the name of district nursing, it has been carried on successfully in England for many years, and has proved a great benefit to the poor, and a source of valuable experience to the nurses. Every dispensary physician will agree that in many of the cases to which he is called, a nurse's services would be more valuable than his own, and there are but few dispensary physicians who have not been obliged to learn in their districts to make beds and cook gruel.

As regards hospital work, the Nightingale School system has been directly adopted in the American schools as far as circumstances would allow, the changes which have been made, being more nominal than real.

A school arranged on this system consists of a superintendent, of head nurses, and of pupils who serve as assistant nurses. The practical instruction of the pupils goes on in the hospitals, and consists largely of nursing performed by the pupils themselves, under the direction of the superintendent and head nurses. All the nurses and pupils live at the so called "Home" belonging to the school. The Home of the Nightingale School, at St. Thomas' Hospital, in London, is in a building attached to the hospital, and the Home of the Liverpool School stands within the grounds of the Royal Infirmary. As an arrangement of this sort was impracticable for the New York and Boston Schools, their Homes were placed in houses secured for the purpose near the hospitals—Lectures on subjects connected with nursing, are given by physicians, either at the homes or in the hospitals. The schools supply the service in the wards under their care, except that done by the scrubbers and ward-tenders or orderlies. The night nursing is done by the pupils in turn.

The first regularly organized school was opened in New York,

at Bellevue Hospital, on May 1st, 1873, the second in Boston, at the Massachusetts General Hospital; Nov. 1st, 1873.¹

Bellevue Hospital in New York, is an old building, with low ceilings and dark wards. A large part of the service in the wards is done by ten-day prisoners, who, in many cases, have been arrested for drunkenness. Under the old system, all the paid nurses were much over-worked, and many of them are said to be of low character. The improvements introduced by the school are very striking. As one passes from a ward nursed in the old system into one of those under the care of the school, the visitor will very likely not have noticed any nurses at work in the wards he has just gone through; but in the school wards they seem at all times busily, though quietly engaged about their patients. Their neat dresses and uniform caps have all the attraction of the uniforms of Sisters of Charity, with the advantage that they seem more convenient for work. It is but fair to quote a few words from the report of the New York school, with regard to the present behavior of the prisoners who work in the school wards. "In this connection, we would mention a result unforeseen by us, which shows the moral influence of our nurses upon the lowest class in the hospital, namely, the helpers or prisoners employed to clean the wards. Formerly these women were the scourge of the place, and in all reports of the 'Local Visiting Committee for Bellevue Hospital,' their presence and their foul language were represented as insulting to the patients. Now, in the wards of our school, many of these women have proved obedient and respectful, and some have begged to be allowed to remain after their time had expired, and have done so, serving without pay for three months, saying, 'It was so like home.' Such are the results which Christian kindness produces upon the most degraded natures."

The Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, has long had the well-deserved reputation of a model hospital. From one end to the other, everything appears neat and clean. Some of the

¹A school was also opened in New Haven in connection with a State Hospital, at about the same time, but the writer has not been able to learn anything with regard to the details of its work. In Philadelphia instruction in nursing is given at the "Woman's Hospital," and at the "Lying-in and Nurse Charity," but they DO NOT APPEAR TO BE REGULARLY ORGANIZED SCHOOLS.

nurses (not connected with the school) have been in the hospital many years, and most of those who have not been there so long have caught the habit of excellence which pervades the building throughout. No new system of nursing could develop the contrasts which are so evident at the New York Hospital. The two wards which were first placed under the care of the School are in the building which is used for some of the most severe and difficult cases, and which, from its construction, can hardly be made pleasant and attractive. The new Warren Ward, however, which is also under the care of the School, is a large pavilion very simply constructed, and in every respect the opposite of the Bellevue Hospital. It is but one story high, and its ceiling, which is close to the roof, is at the highest part over twenty-five feet from the floor. On three sides there are high and broad windows, so that the sun may shine into the ward at every part of the day, and under the eaves is another set of windows, hinged at the lower edges, to admit air as well as light. There are four open fireplaces around a ventilating shaft, and even when the windows are not open enormous quantities of air are thrown into and drawn out of the ward, both day and night, by artificial means. No ward could be more attractive and cheerful either for patients or nurses.

After breakfast the day nurses come from the Homes to the Hospitals, in New York at eight o'clock, in Boston at seven. The work of the day begins with the breakfast of the patient, and for the rest of the day, except while they are at the Homes for dinner, the nurses are pretty steadily occupied till they are relieved at evening by the night nurses. Regular arrangements are made for exercise and recreation. The pupils receive no wages, but ten dollars a month is given them for clothing and personal expenses. At the end of the year of pupilage they become full nurses, and receive a salary about equivalent to that usually received by hospital nurses. They remain, however, for another year under the direction of the School, and may be employed either in the School, taking care of the wards and teaching others, or in other hospitals, or nursing both in poor and in rich families. In the latter case, the money paid for their services belongs to the School, and in this way the nurses may repay the School in part for what they have received in the previous year.

The Boston School has but just arrived at its second year. The organization of this School was begun many months before it was opened. In Boston a circular inviting applications was issued early in August, 1873. This circular was similar to that used by the Nightingale School, but altered in some respects. Three hundred copies were distributed, mainly to physicians in Massachusetts. Up to November 1st, 1873, when the School opened, nineteen candidates had applied, and from these the six pupils were selected who entered the School at the beginning. Up to the present time fifty-one applications for admission have been received. Of these forty-two came from different parts of Massachusetts, three from New York, two from Rhode Island, and one each from Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Connecticut. As to the previous occupations of the applicants, sixteen lived at home, ten were engaged in manufactures or business of some sort, ten were doing housework, nine were nurses or were employed in public institutions, and six were school teachers. At present there are fifteen pupils in the School, who are earnest and intelligent, and give good promise of becoming first-rate nurses. New applications are constantly coming in, and whereas at first the committee had to decline a large proportion of the applicants, as unsuitable, at the present time most of those who apply are such as it would be desirable to admit.

In New York seventy-three applications had been received at the time of the first annual report, nine months after the school opened, "from all parts of the Union, including Colorado territory, Minnesota and California." The New York School opened with nine pupils and two head-nurses in six wards. It now has charge of eight wards, and there are in all twenty-five nurses and pupils, but four of them having finished their year of pupilage, as has been mentioned, are sent out to nurse in private families. They are, however, still under the direction of the school, and subject to the following rules, which are similar to the rules used for the same purpose in England.

Rules for nurses going out to private service:

1st. That the nurses are to attend the sick, both rich and poor, at hospitals or private houses, as the committee or lady-superintendent may appoint.

2d. That when sent from the Home to attend a patient, they

receive their instructions from the lady-superintendent, and do not leave the case without communicating with her; this they can do by letter at any time.

3d. That while on duty in the Home, at the hospital, or in private houses, the regulations of the school with regard to dress are to be observed by the nurse.

4th. That a nurse is always to bring back with her a certificate of conduct and efficiency from the family of her patient, or from the medical attendant.

It is expected that nurses will bear in mind the importance of the situation they have undertaken, and will evince, at all times, the self denial, forbearance, gentleness and good temper so essential in their attendance on the sick, and also to their character as Christian nurses. They are to take the whole charge of the sick-room, doing every'thing that is requisite in it, when called upon to do so. When nursing in families where there are no servants, if their attention be not of necessity wholly devoted to their patient, they are expected to make themselves generally useful. They are to be careful not to increase the expense of the family in any way. They are also most earnestly charged to hold sacred the knowledge which, to a certain extent, they must obtain of the private affairs of such households or individuals as they may attend.

Communications from or on the subject of nurses may be made personally, or by letter, to the Lady-Superintendent, Nurse's Home, 314 E. 26th street, New York.

The important difficulties encountered by the Training Schools in America, have not arisen from any serious lack of suitable pupils. There are women enough of education and intelligence who are willing to spend one year in the hospital, learning to nurse, and a second year in nursing under the control of the School, in order to become thoroughly trained. The great difficulty has been that we were obliged to begin the work in New York with only a trained superintendent, and without trained head-nurses, and in Boston with neither a trained superintendent nor trained head-nurses. Had these schools been established immediately after the War of the Rebellion, we should doubtless have found women of sufficient experience in nursing to be head-nurses, but none who were thoroughly acquainted with the system

of Training Schools. When the School opened in New York, head-nurses were with great difficulty found to take charge of the wards. At the end of six months, however, they had all left the School or had been discharged, and pupils of five months' standing were appointed to supply their places. In Boston two head-nurses were engaged at the outset, one for each of the wards—and up to the present time, there have been in all, five head-nurses who have remained in the School for longer or shorter periods. Only one of them, however, who had been a nurse in the hospital for more than ten years, is still retained. One not having had enough experience for the place, became a pupil, and the others were discharged as being unfit for the position.

Now that there are three wards under the care of the Boston School, the superintendent has, besides the general supervision, also the special supervision of one ward, while the head-nurse is over the other two. The real trouble arises from a want of experience in this country in the practical management of this (to us) new institution, and of the technical knowledge of the subject which it is intended to teach; but this difficulty is rapidly being overcome, with as few drawbacks as could be expected at the beginning of so great an undertaking. With the excellent material which is in them we need have no doubt but that the American Training Schools will take a high place among nursing institutions all over the world. It has been abundantly proved that there is a demand for trained nurses, and women enough of the right sort are coming forward to be educated as fast as the opportunity is given to them.